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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/25/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KU](#) [FREEDOM](#) [AGENDA](#)
SUBJECT: ELECTION COUNTDOWN: STRENGTHENED ANTI-FRAUD
MEASURES; EQUAL POLLING SITES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

REF: KUWAIT 2446 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: CDA Matt Tueller for reason 1.4 (d)

¶1. (C/NF) During a June 24 meeting, the Director of the Ministry of Interior's National Assembly Elections Department, Ali Murad, showed Poloff the voting stands and transparent ballot boxes the GOK has ordered to prevent electoral fraud in the June 29 parliamentary elections. The voting stands are chest-high and resemble a lectern, allowing election monitors to observe voters' movements but not their actual votes. According to Murad, this will prevent two of the most common ways voters verify they have voted for a particular candidate: taking a picture of the ballot using a camera phone, and replacing the ballot with one already filled out by the candidate (and then returning the blank ballot to the candidate for the next person). Another common practice is for a candidate to ask voters to swear on the Quran before paying them for their vote, the irony of which is lost on most Kuwaitis. In previous elections, voters voted behind a curtain, making these practices much easier. The Ministry also special ordered transparent ballot boxes to replace the wooden ones used in previous elections. Murad said the new boxes would, quite literally, increase transparency in the elections and ensure that ballots were not tampered with once placed in the ballot box.

¶2. (SBU/NF) In addition to these measures, the MOI has established a hotline for voters to report cases of vote-buying and has authorized the Kuwait Elections Transparency Society (KETS), a division of the Transparency and Reform Alliance, a local NGO, to follow up on cases of electoral fraud (reftel). Already, four cases have been referred to the public prosecutor. KETS Chairman Anwar Al-Rushaid praised the three women and one man who offered to testify in the vote-buying cases as "heroes," adding that this was "unprecedented in the history of Kuwait's parliamentary elections," Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) reported June 18. He also welcomed the government's anti-corruption efforts. Meanwhile, 49 candidates, many of them Islamists, have signed an agreement pledging to disclose their financial records if elected to Parliament. Two members of Parliament affiliated with the Kuwaiti Muslim Brotherhood first took this unprecedented step in January 2006; no other MPs followed suit.

Election Mechanics

¶3. (SBU/NF) After a couple of last minute withdrawals, there are 252 candidates, including 27 women, remaining in the race. Ninety-one polling stations -- 45 for men and 46 for women -- have been established in Kuwait's 25 electoral constituencies. Polling stations open at 8:00 AM and close at 8:00 PM on Thursday, June 29. Each polling station is

presided over by a judge appointed by the Higher Judiciary Council. (Note: A complete list of the polling stations is available in Arabic at the following website: <http://eservices1.moi.gov.kw/elections/mainmenu.nsf>. End note.) Ministry of Interior personnel are responsible for providing security at the election sites. Election committees will begin counting votes immediately after polling stations close, a process observed by representatives from each candidate in the district. Any of the representatives can contest the count and request a recount. In the event of a tie, the judge picks a method of "casting lots" (e.g. putting both names into a hat) to decide the winner. The results are expected to be announced early Friday morning.

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